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SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: NEW POLITICAL GROUP SINGS OLD SONG

REF: A. JAKARTA 1699
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 2052 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. (U) This message is Sensitive but Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

[1](#)2. (U) While some pundits see new "mass organization" National Democrat (ND) as a challenge to President Yudhoyono, his Partai Demokrat members (PD) are saying its establishment is good for Indonesia's democracy. Media magnate and Golkar member Surya Paloh launched the political group February 1. Leaders of the group included Jogjakarta Governor Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, rector of Paramadina University Anies Baswedan, and former chair of Muhammadiyah Syafii Maarif. Approximately 12,000 people (many of whom were paid) attended the launch, including prominent political, academic and religious leaders such as Partai Demokrat's Deputy Chair, Ahmad Mubarak. The group's stated purpose was to establish a "mature" democracy that is focused on improving the people's welfare.

CHALLENGE TO SBY OR SIGN OF A FLOURISHING DEMOCRACY?

[1](#)3. (SBU) Some commentators see ND as a sign that the Indonesian elite are dissatisfied with Yudhoyono's reform record to date. ND takes a page from President Yudhoyono's play book by imitating the colors, theme song and rhetoric of his successful Partai Demokrat. PD members do not see the new group as criticism, however-- its Deputy Chair remarked that ND has "a similar vision for the nation" and that competition is good for its democracy.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Although ND is apolitical, many pundits are speculating that Paloh (defeated in his October bid for Golkar chair) is testing the waters for a 2014 presidential election run. Parliamentarian and PD member Ramadan Pohan told Poloff that the new movement is a good thing for Indonesia, and that even if the movement turns into a political party down the road, it will not challenge PD: "This group is too focused on the elite. To win the elections you have to win the hearts of the people in the villages, not Jakarta." PD, he said, is focused now on its upcoming leadership contest in May, which will determine the future of the party.

HUME